

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PARAMA 00652 01 OF 02 181906Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----103907 181910Z /44
R 181715Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3496

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PARAMARIBO 0652

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT OEXC NS
SUBJECT: UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS PROJECT ABROAD

REF: PARAMARIBO 0638

SUMMARY: GOS REFUSAL TO COOPERATE WITH UMASS STUDY GROUP ON MULTI-CULTURAL EDUCATION DOES NOT REPRESENT ANY SHIFT IN GENERAL POLICY OF WELCOMING AMERICANS TO SURINAM IN ALL CAPACITIES BUT RATHER IS A PRODUCT OF MOMENTARY DIFFICULTIES IN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION AND FEAR OF POSSIBLE PUBLICITY FALLOUT OF VISIT DURING PERIOD IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING SURINAM'S FIRST NATIONAL ELECTIONS SINCE INDEPENDENCE. UNFORTUNATE OUTCOME OF PROJECT, WITH UMASS GROUP ON THE POINT OF DEPARTURE WHEN WORD OF LOCAL PROBLEMS RECEIVED, UNDERLINES, HOWEVER, IMPORTANCE OF SECURING FIRM COMMITMENT WELL IN ADVANCE WHEN GOS ASSISTANCE REQUIRED BY FOREIGN GROUPS VISITING SURINAM.

1. THE CASE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS PROJECT ABROAD GROUP WHICH WAS TO VISIT SURINAM AT THE END OF JULY, 1977, HAS RAMIFICATIONS BEYOND THOSE REPORTED IN REFTEL AND WHICH NEED TO BE MADE A MATTER OF RECORD IN WASHINGTON.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PARAMA 00652 01 OF 02 181906Z

2. THIS GROUP OBTAINED AN HEW GRANT FOR A VISIT TO TRINIDAD AND SURINAM FOR A STUDY OF MULTI-CULTURAL EDUCATION. THEY ARRANGED TO HAVE AS THEIR LIAISON IN SURINAM ROBIN RAVELES, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT IN THE LEFT-LEANING NATIONAALIST PARTY PNR AND SURINAM'S BEST KNOWN POET AND CULTURAL GUIDE, AND, AT THE EMBASSY'S RECOMMENDATION, SUBMITTED THEIR PROJECT TO THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION IN

FEBURARY, 1977. IN MAY GROUP LEADER VISITED SURINAM AND CONFERRED WITH THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AS WELL AS THE EMBASSY REGARDING PROGRAM. WHILE NO SPECIFIC COMMITMENT OF GOS COOPERATION HAD BEEN GIVEN, NEITHER WAS THERE ANY ADVERSE REACTION, AND ALL WAS PRESUMED ON TRACK UNTIL JUNE 27 WHEN THE GROUP, IMMEDIATELY BEFORE DEPARTURE FROM BOSTON FOR TRINIDAD, RECEIVED A TELEGRAM FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION STATING THAT THE VISIT COULD NOT BE APPROVED BECAUSE OF THE COMING ELECTION BUT THAT IT WOULD BE APPROVED AFTER DECEMBER.

3. AS REQUESTED BY STATE 149211 THE EMBASSY INQUIRED OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION WHAT THE PROBLEM WAS AND WAS TOLD THAT THE MINISTER HIMSELF, MR. VENETIAAN, HAD ORDERED THE VISIT POSTPONED AND THAT ANY INQUIRY WOULD HAVE TO BE DIRECTED TO THE MINISTER. THE AMBASSADOR SAW MINISTER VENETIAAN ON JUNE 30 AND FOUND HIM ADAMANTLY AGAINST THE VISIT AT THIS TIME. HE STATED THAT THERE HAD BEEN INCIDENTS (UNSPECIFIED) IN THE PAST IN WHICH EDUCATORS FROM ABROAD HAD COME TO SURINAM DURING ELECTION CAMPAINGS AND HAD INTERVENED IN LOCAL POLITICS. THE AMEBASADOR EXPLAINED THAT THIS GROUP WAS ONE OF TEACHERS WHO TAUGHT IN A SCHOOL SYSTEM THAT WAS TRYING TO IMPROVE ITS CROSS-CULTURAL APPROACH AND THOUGHT THAT IT WOULD BENEFIT FROM OBSERVING THE SURINAM SCHOOL EXPERIENCE: HOW COULD THAT INTERFERE IN THE ELECTIONS? VENETIAAN DID NOT REPLY
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PARAMA 00652 01 OF 02 181906Z

SPECIFICALLY, BUT STATED THAT THE GROUP WOULD NOT BE WELCOME AT THIS TIME. THE AMBASSADOR IN TURN INQUIRED WHETHER THIS MEANT THAT ALL TEACHER OR EDUCATOR GROUPS FROM THE U.S. WOULD BE UNWELCOME DURING THE ELECTION PERIOD, AND WHETHER THIS WOULD ALSO APPLY TO BUSINESSMEN, TOURISTS OR OTHERS. AGAIN, VENETIAAN DID NOT ANSWER DIRECTLY BUT SAID THAT HE WAS NOT THE ONE TO DECIDE ON GENERAL QUESTIONS BUT ONLY THOSE AFFECTING THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION. HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT EVERYONE KNEW THAT CERTAIN AMERICAN ORGANIZATIONS HAD IN THE PAST INTERFERED IN ELECTIONS IN SOUTH AMERICAN COUNTRIES AND DID NOT WANT TO SEE THAT HAPPEN HERE. THE AMBASSADOR TOOK EXCEPTION TO THIS REMARK AND SAID THAT THE EMBASSY WOULD REQUIRE A CLEAR STATEMENT OF THE GOS POLICY ON VISITORS FROM THE U.S., INCLUDING THE TEACHER GROUP IN IMMEDIATE QUESTION. VENETIAAN SAID THAT HE COULD CONSULT THE MINISTER FOR GENERAL AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS (PRIME MINISTER ARRON) AND REPLY WITHIN THE NEXT WEEK.

4. NO WORD HAVING BEEN RECEIVED FROM VENETIAAN WITHIN THE STATE WEEK, THE AMBASSADOR PHONED HIM ON JULY 11 AND WAS TOLD THAT THE MATTER WAS NOW IN ARRON'S HANDS.

THE AMBASSADOR THEN WENT TO SEE VAN DER GELD, DIRECTOR OF ARRON'S MINISTRY, AND PLACED ALL THE FACTS BEFORE HIM, SAYING THAT TWO GENERAL PROBLEMS WERE INVOLVED: THE GREAT INCONVENIENCE THAT WOULD BE CAUSED THE MASSACHUSETTS GROUP IF THEIR VISIT TO SURINAM WERE CANCELLED, AND THE WIDER QUESTION OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS FOR OTHER EDUCATIONAL GROUPS AND OTHER TRAVELERS INCLUDING BUSINESSMEN AND TOURISTS. IF THE GOS BELIEVED THAT VISIT BY AMERICANS MIGHT HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON ITS ELECTIONS, THEN THE USG WOULD HAVE TO CONSIDER WHETHER IT SHOULD WARN ALL CITIZENS TO INQUIRE IN ADVANCE AS TO THEIR ACCEPTABILITY BEFORE MAKING PLANS TO VISIT THIS COUNTRY.

5. BY JULY 14 IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE DIRECTOR WAS NOT GOING
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 PARAMA 00652 01 OF 02 181906Z

TO BE ABLE TO GIVE A DEFINITIVE REPLY AS REQUESTED BY THE AMBASSADOR, WHO ASKED FOR AN APPOINTMENT AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY WITH THE PRIME MINISTER, WHICH WAS SET FOR MORNING OF JULY 15.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PARAMA 00652 02 OF 02 182029Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----104762 182033Z /65

R 181715Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3497

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PARAMARIBO 0652
EXDIS

6. THE AMBASSADOR REVIEWED CASE IN DETAIL WITH ARRON, SAYING THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO BE INFORMED ON TWO POINTS:
A. WAS THERE A GENERAL POLICY ON THE PART OF THE GOS TO DISCOURAGE AMERICAN VISITORS TO THIS COUNTRY IN THE PRE-ELECTION PERIOD? IF SO, HOW SHOULD THIS BE APPLIED TO BUSINESSMEN AND TOURISTS? IF NOT, WHY THE MASSACHUSETTS GROUP SINGLED OUT FOR ADVERSE TREATMENT?

B. DID THE REMARK OF MINISTER VENETIAAN REGARDING ALLEGED INTERFERENCE BY U.S. ORGANIZATIONS IN SOUTH AMERICAN ELECTIONS REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF THE GOS?

7. ARRON ANSWERED THAT EVERY AMERICAN WAS WELCOME IN SURINAM; THIS HAS BEEN PROVEN OVER THE YEARS AND RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES IN THE EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL FIELD ARE GOOD. IN THIS PRE-ELECTION PERIOD, HOWEVER, THERE ARE FORCES WITHIN THE COUNTRY THAT WILL SEIZE ANY OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE POLITICAL PROBLEMS, REGARDLESS OF THE FACT THAT FOREIGN VISITORS WOULD NOT INTEND TO INTERFERE AND WOULD TRY TO AVOID INVOLVEMENT. THERE WAS A SERIOUS PROBLEM IN THE SCHOOLS AT THIS TIME. AS THE AMBASSADOR KNEW FROM THE PRESS, THERE WAS AN ONGOING CONTROVERSY REGARDING THE FAIRNESS OF THIS YEAR'S FINAL EXAMS, IN WHICH THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION WAS INVOLVED. THE WHOLE SCHOOL SITUATION WAS SUCH THAT HE COULD NOT AGREE TO RECEIVED A GROUP OF AMERICAN TEACHERS WHOSE PRESENCE WOULD BE USED TO FORMENT TROUBLE. THIS POLICY WAS IN NO WAY DIRECTED AT THE U.S.; IT WOULD APPLY TO PEOPLE FROM

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PARAMA 00652 02 OF 02 182029Z

HOLLAND OR ANYWHERE ELSE, AND HE HAD RECENTLY TURNED DOWN A PROSPECTIVE VISIT FROM BRAZIL OF ANOTHER TYPE. THERE WAS NO QUESTION OF ANY OBJECTION TO VISITS BY TOURISTS, BUSINESSMEN OR ANY OTHER AMERICANS AND, IN FACT, HE WOULD NOT EVEN SAY THAT THERE WAS OBJECTION TO ANY AND ALL EDUCATIONAL VISITS BETWEEN NOW AND THE ELECTIONS, BUT ONLY THAT THE NEXT COUPLE OF WEEKS WERE GOING TO BE CRITICAL IN THE SCHOOLS AND HE COULD NOT LET THE MASSACHUSETTS PEOPLE COME. HE ASKED FOR UNDERSTANDING OF THIS PROBLEM.

8. ARRON SAID THAT HE HAD QUERIED VENETIAAN ABOUT HIS REMARK CONCERNING INTERFERENCE BY AMERICAN ORGANIZATIONS IN SOUTH AMERICAN ELECTIONS. VENETIAAN SAID THAT HE HAD SAID THIS IN THE HEAT OF ARGUMENT, ONE WORD LEADING TO ANOTHER, AND HAD NOT MEANT TO IMPLY ANYTHING PARTICULAR. AS FOR HIMSELF, SAID PRIME MINISTER, HE HAD NO FEAR WHATSOEVER THAT THE U.S. WOULD DO ANY SUCH THING; THE WHOLE PICTURE OF HIS RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. SHOWED THAT HE WELCOMED US AND HAD NO REASONS TO OBJECT TO ANY AMERICAN ACTIVITIES IN HIS COUNTRY.

9. THE AMBASSADOR AGREED THAT HE WOULD INFORM THE MASSACHUSETTS GROUP OF THE DESIRE OF THE GOS THAT THEY NOT COME TO SURINAM AT THIS TIME, BUT THAT HE COULD NOT UNDERTAKE TO ORDER THEM NOT TO DO SO, AS THIS WOULD BE BEYOND HIS AUTHORITY. WHILE HE WOULD ADVISE THEM AGAINST PUBLICITY REGARDING THIS MATTER, HE COULD NOT GUARANTEE THAT THE CANCELLATION OF HOTEL RESERVATIONS AND OTHER ARRANGEMENTS

WOULD NOT GIVE RISE TO PUBLICITY, FOR WHICH THE EMBASSY
WOULD TAKE NO RESPONSIBILITY. THE PRIME MINISTER REPLIED
THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THIS AND WOULD BE PREPARED TO DEAL WITH
ANY ADVERSE PUBLICITY THAT OCCURRED.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PARAMA 00652 02 OF 02 182029Z

10. THE MEETING WAS ENTIRELY AMICABLE AND THE CONVERSATION
THEN TURNED TO OTHER TOPICS.

11. COMMENT: FROM ARRON'S ATTITUDE AS WELL AS FROM PRIOR
REMARKS OF VAN DER GELD, IT IS OUR IMPRESSION THAT ARRON
REGRETS THE PRECIPITATE ACTION OF VENETIAAN IN STOPPING
THE TEACHER VISIT AS THE LAST MOMENT, PARTICULARLY AFTER
THE FULL DOCUMENTS HAD BEEN IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
FOR SOME MONTHS. HE SHARES THE FEAR, HOWEVER, THAT THE
ANTI-VENETIAAN FORCES PRESENTLY (AND CONSTANTLY) FIGHTING
THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOLS WOULD MAKE POLITICAL
CAPITAL OUT OF A VISIT OF AMERICAN TEACHERS, AND WE CANNOT
SAY THAT THIS WOULD NOT BE SO. HE CAREFULLY AND COMPLETELY
DISASSOCIATED HIMSELF FROM VENETIAAN'S REMARK ABOUT OFFICIAL
U.S. ELECTION INTERFERENCE, WHICH WE TAKE AS HAVING BEEN,
AS STATED, A STRAW GRASPED AT IN ANY ARGUMENT IN WHICH
VENETIAAN FELT DEFENSIVE. WE DID NOT THINK THAT THIS
REMARK COULD BE LEFT UNCHALLENGED, HOWEVER, NOR THAT
THE ABRUPT CANCELLATION OF THE TEACHER'S VISIT SHOULD BE
LET GO BY WITHOUT RECOGNITION OF ITS ARBITRARY NATURE
AND HIGH INCONVENIENCE.
ZURHELLEN

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 18-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977PARAMA00652
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770256-0187
Format: TEL
From: PARAMARIBO
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770747/aaaabomg.tel
Line Count: 257
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 7a8b1d68-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 77 PARAMARIBO 638
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1829820
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS PROJECT ABROAD
TAGS: PINT, OEXC, NS, UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/7a8b1d68-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009